

GLENARM BRANCH, DENVER YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION
(GLENARM RECREATION CENTER)
501 TWENTYEIGHTH STREET
DENVER
DENVER COUNTY
COLORADO

HABS No. CO-45

HABS
COLO,
16-DENV,
10A-

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NATIONAL ARCHITECTURAL and ENGINEERING RECORD
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20243

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

GLENARM BRANCH, DENVER YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION
(Glenarm Recreation Center)

HABS No. CO-45

Location: 501 28th Street
Denver
Denver County
Colorado 80205

Legal Description: Lots 13, 14, 15, 16, block 79, Case and Ebert's
Addition to the City of Denver.

Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 13.502145.4400340

PROJECT INFORMATION

Implementing Agency: Community Development Agency

Project Title: Glenarm Recreation Center

Documentation Preparation: Barbara Norgren, September 1981

The significance of the Glenarm Branch of the Denver Young Men's Christian Association (Glenarm Recreation Center) lies in its association with Denver's black population and their history.

For many of the building's fifty-seven years of existence, it was the only place in Denver to provide athletic and recreational facilities for the black community as well as educational programs, employment counseling, lodging rooms, a branch of the Denver Public Library. The building also provided space for the neighborhood to hold numerous organizational and community meetings and social functions.

The newspapers of the late 1920s referred to the Glenarm Y as the "town hall of Five Points", the "social headquarters" and a "school of good citizenship". It was the recreational and social center for Denver's black population.

During World War II, the Glenarm Y was a hospitality and recreation center for the black military personnel and war workers who had moved into the Denver area. After the building was sold to the city in 1967, it continued to serve the recreational needs of the Five Points neighborhood as the Glenarm Recreation Center, and used currently in that capacity.

The future plans for the building call for demolition of the old structure and the construction of a new recreation facility. The anticipated time for demolition is February or March of 1982 with new construction to follow. This project is part of Denver's Community Development program.

The decision for demolition of the old structure was based on the following reasons:

- The old building is inadequate and additions to the existing building are impossible due to its location on the site.
- The building has a number of building code violations which are not correctable through remodeling.
- The cost of remodeling is prohibitive and would cost more than the construction of a new building.

The Glenarm Branch of the Y is the oldest building in the present-day Five Points Community Center complex. It is the southern most building and faces southwest onto 28th Street and East 26th Avenue. There is a residential area to the south bounded by East 26th, East 20th, Downing and Washington Streets. This area was surveyed in the summer of 1981 and may possibly be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

The location of the Glenarm Y is approximately in the center of the Five Points, Whittier and Cole neighborhoods, the area where the majority of Denver's black population has lived since the early 1900s. Its location made it easily accessible and was only three blocks from the Five Points intersection of Welton Street, the historic black commercial section of the city.

The residential development in Five Points began early in the 1870s, when the population exploded with the arrival of the first railroad in 1870. The original residents were mainly Anglo-Saxon, many of whom had immigrated from Western Europe.

During that time, the black population had only grown from 89 persons in 1861 to 237 by 1870. The majority lived between Blake and Arapahoe between 18th and 21st Streets.

As the nineteenth century drew to a close many of the original residents of Five Points had died or moved into newer more fashionable neighborhoods to the east, such as Whittier and Cole, and south to Capitol Hill. At the same time, the commercial section of downtown had grown to such an extent that the black population began moving further northeast into Five Points, away from the noise and fumes of the expanding city. By 1900, the black population was estimated at 4,000 with over 2,000 living in Five Points.

Within a few years, the Denver YMCA decided to locate their second department (branch), the Colored Men's Department in the Five Points neighborhood.

The date of the founding of the Denver Young Men's Christian Association varies from 1875 to 1877. Two sources indicate that Denver had an active YMCA as early as 1864, six years after the founding of the city. According to the Colorado Tribune, (20 November 1864, no p.), a fund raising address was given by George Francis Train that netted the Denver Y \$245. In 1867, the Denver Y was fully organized with reading rooms on Larimer Street open every day from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m., according to the Rocky Mountain News. (8 May 1867, no p.).

Don Kemp, assistant general director of the Y in 1972, stated the Denver Y was founded on 30 December 1875 by seven young men at a meeting in the First National Bank Building on Blake Street. (Denver Post, 26 Aug. 1972).

1877 is the date given by Jerome C. Smiley in his History of Denver (p. 731). However, the most widely accepted date appears to be 1875 since the Denver Y held its fiftieth anniversary in December of 1925 to commemorate its founding.

The first department of the Denver Y was the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad Department, founded 29 December 1891. It was located in West Denver near the railroad shops at 1040 West 8th Avenue and provided a reading room and library. The main branch of the Y had no permanent home until 1906. That year, they purchased lots at the northwest corner of East 16th Avenue and Lincoln Street and built the handsome building that stands there today.

There is some question as to the exact year the Colored Men's Department was established in Five Points or where they met the first few years. The main YMCA office gives 1908 as the date and the Rocky Mountain News (14 February 1923, pp. 1 & 3) gives 1911. The Denver City Directory does not list the Colored Men's Department until 1915.

By 1914, the Five Points neighborhood residents were predominantly black and the need for recreational and educational facilities for the youth of the area was apparent to the leaders of the Denver Y. Funds were raised to purchase a frame house in 1914 for the Colored Men's Department at 2800 Glenarm Street.

This property consisted of Lots 15, 16 and the southwest 20 feet of lot 14, block 79, Case and Ebert's Addition to the City of Denver. (Recorded 13 July 1914, book 2418, n.p., no grantor given). The two story Italianate style residence faced onto Glenarm Street with a veranda across the front and a one story bay window with cresting on the roof on the southwest side. At the alley behind the house, there was a two story frame barn on the 28th Street side of the property. Records indicate this house had been constructed circa 1881 by George G. Darrow, a partner in Darrow, Howard and Company, a real estate and loan firm. By the time the Y purchased the property, Darrow no longer owned it and it is not known who the owner was in 1914.

The frame building only provided room for club and reading rooms and had no athletic facilities. The largest room contained a small fold up pool table and a piano. For meetings, these were moved aside for seating.

Upstairs, there were three rooms. One for the use of Thomas J. Bell, the secretary, and the other two for storage of band uniforms and boy scout equipment.

The only place where black youngsters could swim or use gym facilities was at the Public Bath House at 23rd and Curtis Streets. The pool, however, was only open for their use one day a week - the day before the pool water was changed.

After a time, the old frame building began to literally wear out as the population of the area grew. After investigating the conditions, Dr. J.H.P. Westbrook, chairman of management for the Colored Men's Department, found the facilities inadequate and a great need for a swimming pool. These conditions were also apparent to Charles Alfred Johnson, a Denver realtor and a long time leader in the Denver Y. It was these two men who appear to have been the prime movers in obtaining a new YMCA facility for Five Points.

In February of 1921, the Denver Y purchased additional land adjacent to the old frame building, which brought the site to a total of four lots. (Lot 13 and north 5 feet of lot 14, block 79, Case and Ebert's Addition. Book 2768, p. 262. Warranty deed recorded 23 February 1921. Andrew Wallace, grantor).

Early in 1923, Johnson kicked off a fund drive with the donation of \$5,000. There was the provision that \$30,000 be raised by 1 July 1923 and the stipulation that \$5,000 of this be raised by the black community. They actually subscribed some \$12,800 by the end of the fund drive. Other contributions came from community leaders in Denver such as William Sweet, former Governor and Senator Lawrence Phipps. Mrs. Johnson matched her husband's pledge with \$5,000 of her own.

The new building would provide the boys of the neighborhood with a healthy atmosphere for recreation and athletics. The employment department would be enlarged and could assist in placing boys in apprenticeships.

Construction of the new building began early in 1924 with the demolition of the old frame house. The contractor was Harvey Steinmark. (Building Permit #1090, 8 March 1924) The architectural firm of William Norman Bowman donated the design for the building. (Denver Post, 20 October 1929, Sec. 1, p. 11) The completed building was dedicated in December 1924.

The original idea for a swimming pool had been expanded along the way and the result was a much larger building than originally intended. The final cost was close to \$100,000.

It was at this time the name was changed from the Colored Men's Department to the Glenarm Branch. This change is reflected in newspaper articles of that time and in the Denver City Directory.

The new building offered a wide variety of services and facilities. On the main floor, the lobby which had a white tile floor, was used for a reading room and billiards. In addition, there was a boys club room, gymnasium, a branch of the Denver Public Library and three offices. The swimming pool was in the basement below the first floor gym in the south-east wing. The second and third floors had rooms which could accomodate fifty-five to sixty men and the rental brought in additional funds. The Y had a contract with the railroads to house their porters and waiters there. By 1926, there was an average of seventy-five lodgers per day, including porters, tourists and thirty permanent young lodgers.

Membership in the Glenarm branch expanded rapidly. In 1926, there were 375 men and 125 boys and in 1929, the membership drive resulted in 610 members. Among the leaders in the black community who lent their support to the membership drives and activities were Dr. J.H.P. Westbrook, a physician; J.A. Franklin, a real estate man; George Morrison, a well known Denver musician.

There was an almost endless variety of activities taking place in the building. There were swimming lessons for men, women, girls and boys; volleyball and basketball; gym classes; educational classes; socials; hand-ball tournaments; and boxing meets. The meeting rooms were utilized by many community organizations and groups including the Knights of Pythias, the Elks drill team and on Sunday afternoons, the ministerial alliance of Denver's Negro clergy held regular meetings. The guest speakers at these meetings were white ministers, lawyers, Supreme Court justices and other prominent Denver citizens.

During the next three decades, the Glenarm Y was in constant use due to the racial barriers which barred blacks from other recreational facilities in the city. By 1950, the black population was nearly 7,000. Their residential area was primarily in the neighborhoods in the Five Points area because of restrictive covenants which prevented blacks and Jews from purchasing property east of York Street and in other sections of the city. York Street is the east boundary of the Whittier and Cole neighborhoods which are directly east of Five Points.

In 1948, the United States Supreme Court ruled that the Fourteenth Amendment was violated by the use of the covenants, but it took until 1954 and the passage of the Colorado Fair Housing Law by the Colorado State Legislature before these covenants were abolished.

When the blacks began to move out of Five Points, they established their residential area between York Street and Colorado Boulevard between East 23rd Avenue and Martin Luther King Boulevard (East 32nd Avenue).

Due to the years of heavy use, the Glenarm Y was very much in need of repairs by 1940. The building was reroofed by the Western Elaterite Roofing Company in 1942 (Building Permit #1589, 16 March 1942). In 1943, fifty-six feet of rock lath and plaster partitions were installed by C.H.H. Cosman, contractor, but the location of the work is not known (Building Permit #4301, 20 September 1943).

A membership campaign and fund drive for a major improvement program was undertaken in the fall of 1950. At that time, Judge Phillip B. Gilliem of the Denver Juvenile Court heartily endorsed an expanded and improved facility at the Glenarm Branch. In his view, it would be of great value to the city and would aid in eliminating juvenile delinquency through its new intergroup and intercultural programs available to all of East Denver.

The 1950 rehabilitation included a new boy's entrance into the building, a new pool, gymnasium, locker rooms, and showers. The hallways and room partitions were also altered.

The Glenarm Branch was again in need of repairs by the 1960s. After an investigation of the Glenarm facilities, it was decided that it should be merged with the Park Hill Branch at East 31st Avenue and Madison Street. This branch had been established in 1948 at Sportland Beach when the Y bought the property and improved the facilities. The main reasons for the merger were that Sportland, Glenarm and the main YMCA were relatively close together and there was ample land at Sportland for additional expansion to develop a more modern program. Both Sportland and Glenarm, which were only 1.6 miles apart, had both been losing money. In 1966, the decision was made to merge the two branches into the East Denver Branch. The members of Glenarm were to be given memberships at the East Branch at reduced rates.

In December 1967, the City of Denver purchased the Glenarm building from the Denver Y (Warranty deed recorded 11 December 1967, book and page number not known) and the building became the Glenarm Recreation Center under the Denver Parks and Recreation Department, still in use today.

In 1970-71, another major remodeling program was undertaken. All of the interior partitions in the basement and first floors were removed, excepting the pool and gymnasium areas. The spaces were rearranged and new walls and partitions were built. The cost estimate for this remodeling was placed at around \$100,000. The architects for the remodeling were the Denver firm of McOg. They determined at that time that there were no original blueprints for the building still in existence.

The exterior of the Glenarm Y retains the appearance it had when originally built. It is a very plain, utilitarian building devoid of decorative architectural elements. There have been only minimal exterior alterations and no additions to the building. The only obvious alteration is the redesign of the rear entrance in the court yard.

The building is constructed of three distinct elements, the main section and the northwest and southeast wings, and form a modified U plan. The main section and the southeast wing are three stories high plus a basement and the northwest wing is one story plus a basement and contains a side entrance.

All sections have gable roofs. The end wall of the southeast wing has a stepped, curved parapet at the front of the building. The main section has a side gable roof with a clipped gable or jerkin head on on the Glenarm Street end of the building.

The main entrance is located at the right side of the main section and is reached by a flight of steps.

The exterior walls are faced with brick of a light brown hue and the raised foundation is faced with a brick of a darker shade of brown. This raised foundation allows for large windows, arranged in groups of three, to provide light into the basement.

The windows on the first floor are wood frame and semi-arched, each containing three sections. The upper floor windows are rectangular and covered with wooden shutters.

Nothing remains of the original interior on the basement and first floors. There is no information to date that indicates any major changes on the upper floors.

According to the McOg blueprints for the 1970-71 remodeling, the plans called for the basement to contain a work-out room, a meeting room, custodian work shop and mechanical equipment, leather work and arts and crafts room, and a cooking room. On the first floor, a children's room, meeting room, lounge, lobby, game room and director's office. The pool, gym, showers and lockers remained in the southeast wing and there were no extensive alterations made to that section at that time.

According to the Tax Assessor appraisal card, the building is heated by low pressure steam, the wiring and lighting are average, the roof is tar and gravel, the floors are concrete on grade and wood joist, the windows are wood frame and the exterior walls are common and face brick.

This information was researched and prepared by Barbara S. Norgren, research consultant, for Denver Community Development Agency.

21 September 1981

WILLIAM NORMAN BOWMAN

Bowman, the architect of the Glenarm YMCA, was born in Carthage, New York on 12 May 1868 and came to Denver in 1910. His early educational years were long and difficult. When Bowman was eleven years old, his father was disabled in an accident and was bedridden. Young Bowman, the eldest of five children, went to work to help support the family. He worked twelve hours a day in a woolen mill and received \$20 a month. After work he would study drawing and math at the home of a school teacher. After his father recovered his health, Bowman got a job in an architect's office in Jackson, Michigan. While there, he was advised to learn carpentry, technics and theory in order to become an architect. Bowman began an apprenticeship in carpentry and attended night school for classes in technics and theory. His education completed, he worked for architect, Elijah Myers, in Detroit. Myers was the architect for the Colorado State Capitol Building in Denver.

Bowman's first wife was Alice May Kniffin, born in Michigan in 1864 and they had one daughter, Dorothy. Alice Bowman died in Denver in 1943. Bowman married Mary Louise Dubs of Westmont, New Jersey on 23 July 1943 in Raton, New Mexico. He died 28 August 1944 at the age of 76 at the Norman Apartments in Denver, a building he had designed, and is buried at Fairmont Cemetery.

The design of the Glenarm YMCA building is not as interesting in terms of style, as some of William Bowman's other buildings. However, it is possible that the budget did not allow for anything other than a straight forward and utilitarian building.

The Telephone Building at 14th and Curtis is probably Bowman's best design and it is a good example of the lavish use of decorative terra cotta. Bowman's work in Denver during the 1920s and '30s was at a time when the use of terra cotta architectural detail was very much in vogue. This trend is apparent on his other buildings in the city.

The following is a partial list of buildings designed by William Norman Bowman:

Denver, Colorado

Colorado State Office Building, corner of Colfax and Sherman - 1919-1921
Byers Junior High School, 150 Humboldt Street - 1923
Cole Junior High School, 3240 Humboldt Street - 1923
Glenarm branch of the YMCA (Glenarm Recreation Center), 2800 Glenarm
(501 28th Street) - 1924
Cosmopolitan Hotel (Plaza Cosmopolitan), 1780 Broadway - 1926
Denver Theater (demolished), 510 16th Street - 1927
Telephone Building (Mountain Bell Building), 931 14th Street - 1928
City and County Building, West 14th Avenue and Bannock Street - 1932
(Bowman was one of the Allied Architects)
Colburn Hotel, 980 Grant Street - n.d.
Norman Apartments, 99 South Downing - n.d.
Continental Oil Building (demolished) - n.d.
Park Hill United Methodist Church, 5209 Montview Boulevard - n.d.

Colorado

Adams State Teacher's College (unknown number of buildings), Alamosa - n.d.
Four high school buildings, Longmont; Greeley; Ft. Collins; Ft. Morgan - n.d.
Gymnasium, Colorado State Reformatory, Buena Vista - n.d.
State Penitentiary, (unknown number of buildings), Canyon City - n.d.

CHARLES ARTHUR JOHNSON

The guiding force in raising the funds for the construction of the Glenarm YMCA was Charles Arthur Johnson, A Denver social and business leader in real estate and finance. He was a partner in the real estate firm of Lyons and Johnson and owned several Denver buildings, including the Johnson Building at 17 and Glenarm Streets.

Johnson came to Denver to make his fortune from Salem, Massachusetts, where he was a cobbler by trade. After his 1902 marriage to Miss Ann Valhut Burnett of Ft. Worth, Texas in Kansas City, they lived in Park Hill in a house they called "The Hut".

At about the same time Johnson was raising money for the construction of the Glenarm Y, he was in the process of building another home near Sadalia, Colorado on the top of a hill. The large stone castle was constructed 1924 to 1926 and named "Charlford" (Cherokee Ranch).

In 1925, a year after the dedication of the new Glenarm Y, Johnson was chairman of the dinner to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Denver YMCA held at the Denver Dry Goods Tea Room on Thursday, 17 December 1925.

Due to failing health, Johnson moved to California in 1949 and died there 3 August 1954. His body was brought back to Denver for funeral services at St. John's Episcopal Cathedral and was buried at Fairmont Cemetery.

SOURCES CONSULTED

Baist, C. William and H.V. Atlas of the City of Denver, Colorado. Philadelphia: 1905.
Maps, arranged by section of the city, show buildings on their lots and give lot, block numbers and some addresses. Color coded as to materials - frame, brick or stone.

Blumenson, John J.-G. Identifying American Architecture. Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1977, p. 92.
Small handbook of periods in American architecture with identification of styles, decorative and structural elements.

Colorado Tribune (Denver), 20 Nov. 1864, no p. (Colorado Historical Society Library card file) Denver Y.

Denver Building Department. "Building Permit Applications", microfilm, Western History Department, Denver Public Library.
Permit #1090, 8 March 1924.
Permit #1589, 16 March 1942.
Permit #4301, 20 September 1943.

Denver City Directory. 1992 to 1888 and 1908 to 1927.
Arranged alphabetically by last name. Gives occupation and place of residence. Separate section lists information on city government, churches, societies and organizations.

Denver Community Development Office. Current project information.

Denver Householder Directory. 1927 to 1932. 2800 Glenarm.
Arranged alphabetically by street. House numbers are numerical under each street heading. Gives names of buildings and occupants.

Denver Tax Assessor. "Master Property Books", Case and Ebert's Addition, block 79.
Gives chain of title by lot and block number for each addition in city from c. 1890 - 1940s.

Denver Times.
1 Jan. 1901, p. 3. D&RG R.R. Department.
27 May 1902, p. 5. C.A. Johnson marriage.
14 Feb. 1923, p. 10. Glenarm Y.

Jones, William C. and Forrest, Kenton. Denver: A Pictorial History. Boulder: Pruett Publishing Co., 1973, p. 253.
Contains old photos of Denver buildings and follows Denver history by cultural themes. Text is brief.

McDg Architects. Blueprints for Glenarm Y remodeling in 1970 - 1971.

Real Estate Block Book. "East Denver", Case and Ebert's Addition, block 79, microfilm, Western History Department, Denver Public Library.
Arranged by blocks in city additions with names of early property owners noted on each lot. Various dates not given.

Rocky Mountain News (Denver).
8 May 1867, no p. (Colorado Historical Society Library card file) Denver Y.
14 Feb. 1923, pp. 1,3. Glenarm Y with picture of old building on p. 3.
29 Aug. 1944, p. 16. William N. Bowman obit.
25 Feb. 1951, no p. Denver Y.

Robinson, Elisha. "Atlas of the City of Denver, Colorado." New York: 1887.
Maps show buildings on the lots and are color coded as to materials.

Sandorn Map Co., Ltd. "Real Estate Atlas." New York: reprint 1929.
Maps show completed buildings on the lots and are color coded as to materials.

Smiley, Jerome C. History of Denver. (1901; reprint ed., Evansville, Ind.; Uni-graphic, Inc., 1971, p. 731.
A definitive history of Denver from pre-settlement days to 1901.

The Denver Post.

20 Oct. 1929, sec. 1, p.11. Glenarm Y.
11 Nov. 1948, p. 32. Park Hill Y.
28 Nov. 1950, p. 18. Glenarm Y.
4 Aug. 1954, p. 18. Johnson obit.
24 Aug. 1966, p. 18. Merger of Glenarm Y.
26 Aug. 1972, p. 19. Denver Y.

"The Service the 'Y' Renders Denver." 1926, p. 9. Colorado Clipping Collection,
Western History Department, Denver Public Library.
Small pamphlet on Denver YMCA activities in 1926.

INTERVIEWS

Charles R. Cousins, long time property owner in Five Points, 16 Sept. 1981.

Peter Gabel, Denver YMCA, 9 Sept. 1981.

Edgar Johnson, director of Denver Parks Planning, 11 Sept. 1981.

Sarah Simms, husband was an early member of Glenarm Y, 16 Sept. 1981.

OTHER POSSIBLE SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Bill Richardson, Director of East Branch of YMCA and Paul Stewart, director of
Black American West History Museum.
Both have information, but were too busy to locate it.

The following persons were not interviewed, but have been associated with the
Glenarm Y and the Five Points neighborhood for many years:

James R. Williams
Eugene Porter
Thomas Bean
Elvyn Caldwell
Mrs. William Fountain

East Side Health
Center

Five Points Community Center

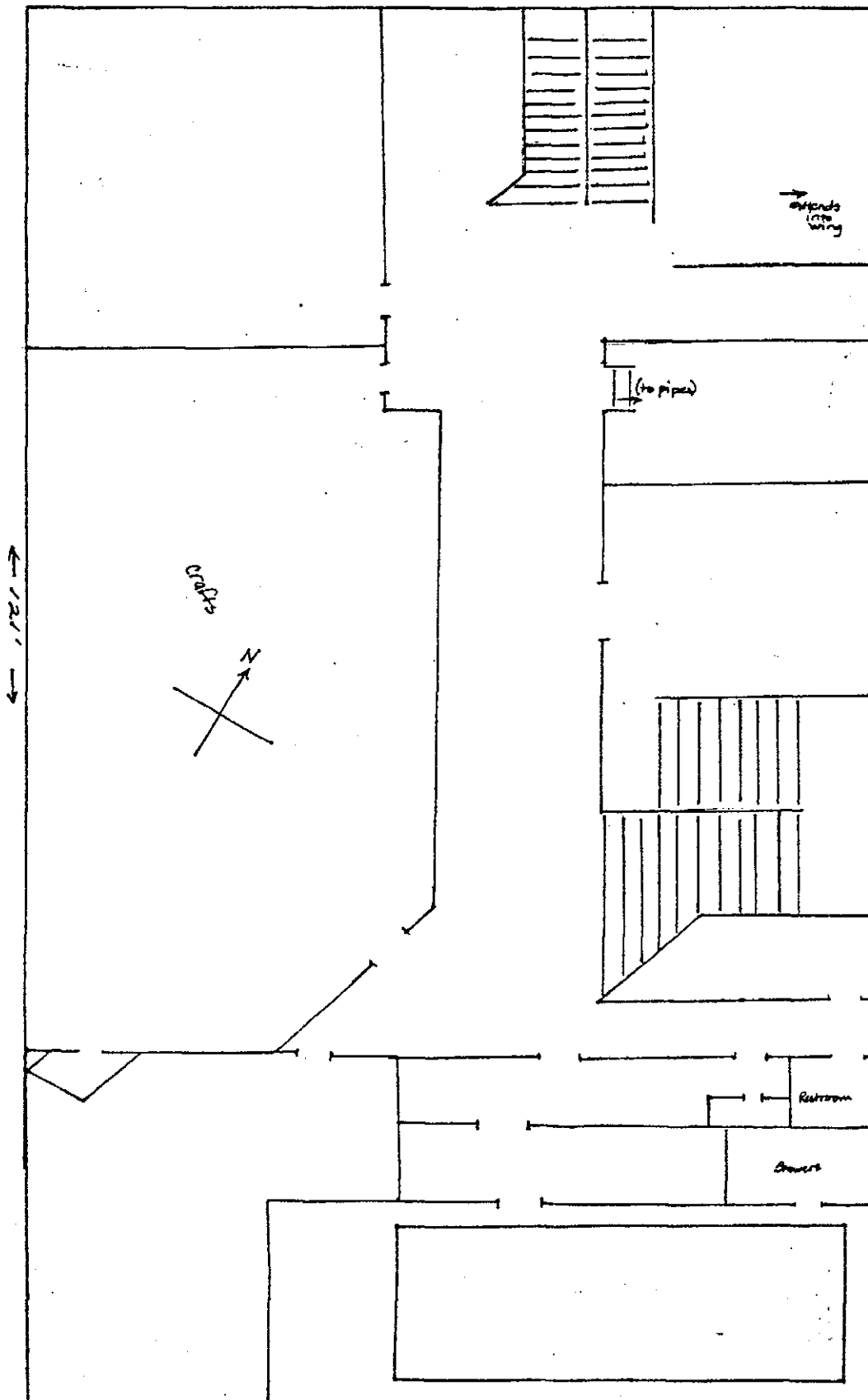
(Glenarm Recreation Center)

Young Men's Christian Association
Glenarm Branch

GLENARM ST.

28TH ST.

BASEMENT FLOOR PLAN - 11/16/81



FIRST FLOOR PLAN - 11/16/81

